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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ANBAR TRIBAL MOVEMENT EYEING GREATER PROVINCIAL,
NATIONAL ROLE

REF: BAGHDAD 3538

Classified By: Acting PRT Team Leader COL William Dwiggin
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Anbar reporting cable.

Summary

[1](#)2. (S) In the absence Anbar's top political leadership, currently in Amman after two weeks in the United States, the anti-insurgent tribal movement Sahawa al-Iraq has been considering ways to increase its political power in Anbar at the expense of the ruling Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and make a leap to the national political stage. This culminated in what appears to be an inconclusive meeting on November 10 between some SAI members and Prime Minister Maliki, which did not include the participation of SAI's top leadership. SAI member Sheikh Abd Al-Jabbar Abu Risha, the younger brother of SAI leader Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, told us the delegation leaders were acting on their own and were not deputized to negotiate ministerial positions for SAI. Serious discussions with Maliki on possible SAI ministerial candidates would begin only when SAI leader Ahmad returned to Iraq from the U.S., Abd Al-Jabbar told us. Reporting from MNF-West indicates that SAI leader Ahmad had discussed the removal of Anbar Governor Ma'amoun before he left for the United States. Participants in the November 10 meeting with Maliki confirm that the removal of Provincial Council Chair and IIP member Abdulsalam Abdullah was raised by the delegation during their meeting with Maliki. Maliki apparently did not commit to this. Nevertheless, Abd Al-Jabbar confirmed that SAI would like to gain more seats on the Anbar Provincial Council, perhaps by cutting a deal with the IIP. Other SAI contacts tell us the group is making plans to strike a deal with the IIP to get rid of Governor Ma'amoun and/or Provincial Council Chairman Abdulsalam. End Summary.

When the Cat's Away

[1](#)3. (C) In the two-plus weeks since Anbar's top political leadership left for a State Department-sponsored trip to the United States, the anti-insurgent tribal movement Sahawa al-Iraq, or Awakening Council of Iraq (SAI), has been considering ways to increase its political power in Anbar at the expense of the ruling Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and make a leap to the national political stage in a bid to replace the Tawafuq bloc as the driver of Sunni interests. This has resulted in a discussion within SAI on how best to follow up on their October 24 letter to Prime Minister Maliki offering 11 SAI-backed candidates to serve as cabinet ministers (reftel). It has also included plans to gain Maliki's support to remove Anbar Governor Ma'amoun Sami Rasheed, and possibly Provincial Council Chairman Abdulsalam Abdullah - both IIP members. This culminated in what appears to be an inconclusive meeting on November 10 between some SAI members

and Maliki, which did not include the participation of SAI's top leadership.

Loose Cannons

14. (C) The November 10 meeting with Maliki involved a delegation of about 35 Anbari sheikhs and notables led by SAI Deputy Ali Hatem Abdul Razzaq Ali Suleiman and Hamid Farhan Al Hayis. In our discussions with Abd Al-Jabbar Abu Risha, the younger brother of SAI leader Sheikh Ahmad Abu Risha, who had been in the U.S., Abd Al-Jabbar indicated that Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis were acting on their own and were not deputized to negotiate ministerial positions for SAI. Both Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis are considered loose cannons with a history of self promotion at the expense of SAI, according to Abd Al-Jabbar. Both had offered themselves in August to Maliki as ministers, only to be turned down by the Prime Minister and rebuked by SAI. Hamid Al Hayis is listed as a possible ministerial candidate in Ahmad's October 24 letter to Maliki. Ali Hatem is not. However, their November 10 meeting with Maliki was not the official SAI follow up to their letter offering ministerial candidates, Abd Al-Jabbar told us. During the meeting, Maliki's staff even telephoned Abd Al-Jabbar to inquire whether Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis were authorized to nominate or negotiate ministerial positions on behalf of SAI, indicating that one or both had raised the issue. Abd Al-Jabbar told Maliki's staffers that they were not. Abd Al-Jabbar indicated that neither he nor Ahmad were happy that Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis met with Maliki, suggesting that the two thought they could use their SAI connections to secure ministerial positions for themselves before Ahmad returned from the U.S. and re-asserted control over SAI. When asked what the two may

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have got from their meeting with Maliki, Abd Al-Jabbar sneered, "Maybe the Prime Minister gave them some money."

15. (C) Serious discussions with Maliki on possible SAI ministerial candidates would begin only when SAI leader Ahmad returned to Iraq from the U.S., Abd Al-Jabbar told us. Ahmad arrived in Amman from his U.S. visit November 12 (while in the U.S., Ahmad, Governor Ma'amoun and PC Chair Abdulsalam met with President Bush, Secretary Rice, Defense Secretary Gates, and National Security Council Director Hadley). Ahmad has indicated he wanted to visit his family in Dubai before returning to Iraq. The exact date of Ahmad's return to Iraq is not clear.

Local Politics

16. (C) Despite Abd Al-Jabbar's assertion that Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis were not acting on SAI's behalf while meeting with Maliki, reporting from MNF-West indicates that SAI leader Ahmad spoke with Hamid Al Hayis on October 25 - the day before Ahmad left for the United States - about the need to remove Governor Ma'amoun Sheikh Muhammad Farhan al Hayis al Thiyabi, one of the Anbari sheikhs who attended the November 10 meeting, confirmed that the group spoke to Maliki about removing Provincial Council Chair Abdulsalam. Maliki apparently did not commit to this. According to Muhammad al Hayis (Hamid al Hayis, brother) the group did not discuss possible ministerial candidates with Maliki. However, some Arab media outlets reported that both Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis were offered ministerial positions. These reports have not been substantiated. On a separate issue, Muhammad al Hayis reported that the delegation was able to secure an agreement from Maliki to approve the release of Anbari detainees who had not been convicted of crimes against Iraqi citizens. This was confirmed by a November 11 press release from Maliki's media office.

17. (C) It appears that SAI, which formed in 2006 as an ad-hoc tribal movement designed to rid the province of

Al-Qaeda, plans to improve its power base in Anbar while attempting to move to the national stage. Members have transformed the group into a political party to compete in elections. Abd Al-Jabbar confirmed that SAI would like to gain more seats on the Provincial Council, perhaps by cutting a deal with IIP. Many Anbaris view the Provincial Council as illegitimate, as it was formed on scant voter turnout after the Sunni-boycotted 2005 poll. About two percent of Anbar's eligible voters turned out, resulting in an IIP victory. As the tribal-backed SAI grew to prominence in 2006 and 2007, Provincial Council Chair Abdulsalam agreed to expand the Council to include eight SAI members, recognizing SAI's growing influence. SAI member and advisor to Ahmad, Samir Rasheed, confirmed with us recently that SAI is making plans to strike a deal with the IIP to get rid of the Governor, and, if possible Provincial Council Chairman Abdulsalam, as well as further expand SAI membership on the Provincial Council.

Comment

18. (C) The November 10 meeting between PM Maliki and the Anbari delegation led by SAI members Ali Hatem and Hamid Al Hayis does not seem to have produced anything substantial for SAI, other than a promise by Maliki to release some detainees. Despite the apparently inconclusive meeting, SAI's Abd Al-Jabbar Abu Risha tells us SAI leader Ahmad Abu Risha plans to discuss SAI's offer of ministers with Maliki when he returns to Iraq later this month, either from Amman or Dubai. Other SAI contacts tell us the organization is keen to pursue the removal of IIP-back Governor Ma'amoun and Provincial Council Chairman Abdulsalam, and gain control of the Provincial Council in Anbar. End Comment.
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